

Town of Wethersfield
505 SILAS DEANE HIGHWAY
WETHERSFIELD, CONNECTICUT 06109



February 3, 2023

As Director of the Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Department for the past 33 years, I strongly oppose the raised bill concerning municipal youth camps. Municipal camps are organized, implemented, supervised and evaluated by full time, professional Parks and Recreation staff with experience and education in camp operations and management. As professionals, we hold ourselves to the highest standards and diligently strive to provide the safest, most equitable and positive services to children in our diverse community. Within our municipal government, there already exists layers of management oversight as well as a town council, many of whose members are parents of children who participate in our camps.

If this bill was to be implemented, departments will have to increase camp fees to cover the licensing requirements. For most departments, summer camp operations have to be self-sustaining and cover the expenses of running the camps, including staffing, training, transportation and programming. This proposed legislation will necessitate an increase in staffing to handle the associated work to meet the licensing requirements. The proposed licensing mandates would add an additional expense and have the potential to make our camps unaffordable. As a department, we work hard to keep our camp fees affordable and equitable allowing for all children in our community to experience camp.

As a public entity, it is our responsibility to make our municipal programs available to everyone in our community, not just the ones who can afford it. Adding more financial burdens to our camp operations without any state or municipal aid to assist in the process, will only lead to less camps being offered and camp opportunities not being available to our children. This legislation will disproportionately affect our most vulnerable populations. Many families rely on our summer camps for childcare, so a decrease in camp offerings will only further compound the shortage of childcare opportunities in communities across the state. At a time when we are working together to combat the social and emotional issues that our youth face, we should be increasing our positive youth experiences.

The Town of Wethersfield operates 15 summer camps at 5 different locations. These camps provide opportunities for children in our community from ages 4 through 15. Covid proved how essential parks and recreation services are to a community. The passing of this legislation will have a significant impact on our ability to provide camp programs for the youth and families in our community.

Kathleen A. Bagley

Kathleen A. Bagley, Director
Parks and Recreation Department
Social and Youth Services Department